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RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 3413
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000007

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SUBJECT: DESPITE GOZ RHETORIC, COOPERATION WITH UN ONGOING

REF: (A) 2005 USUN 2887 (B) 2005 HARARE 1728 (C) 2005

HARARE 1699 (D) 2005 HARARE 1681 (E) 2005
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Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Eric T. Schultz under Section 1.
4 b/d

Summary

11. (C) In the month since UN Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Jan Egeland visited Zimbabwe, the GOZ has continued its vitriolic attacks against the envoy and the UN, especially over the issue of shelter for the victims of Operation Murambatsvina. UN contacts, however, report that the GOZ,s public attacks have not impeded their operations or the government,s low-level cooperation. End Summary.

Public Attacks on UN

12. (SBU) Since Egeland concluded his visit to Zimbabwe on December 7 (Ref E), the GOZ has wasted no opportunity to publicly criticize the UN Envoy for his unvarnished assessment of the local humanitarian situation and especially for his public endorsement of Special Envoy Tibaijuka,s scathing report on Operation Murambatsvina. Following President Mugabe's lambasting of Egeland at the ZANU-PF annual national conference on December 9 (Ref D), the UN envoy,s briefing to the UNSC on December 19 (Ref A) prompted a second wave a recrimination, with one government-controlled newspaper saying that Egeland was &spoiling for a fight.⁸

13. (C) The GOZ,s attacks on the UN continue to center on

the issue of shelter for Murambatsvina,s victims. The UN and donors have rejected the government,s efforts to get them to build permanent housing, which they fear would go to government supporters rather than the real victims. For its part, the GOZ has rejected the UN and donor offers of tents as temporary shelters. A compromise appeared to have been worked out during Egeland,s visit to build a core structure that recipients could add on to at a later date. However, on December 20, Local Government Minister Chombo condemned and ordered the demolition of a model one-room house built at Hopely Farm by the UN and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Chombo claimed that the model) which UN and IOM sources confirmed had been designed jointly by the UN and the GOZ) was below human dignity and had been guided by a this-is-good-for-the-African attitude.8

But Continued Cooperation

14. (C) According to UN and IOM sources, GOZ attacks have been designed for public consumption and have not ended cooperation. IOM program development officer Diane Epstein, who worked on the model shelter at Hopely Farm, told poloff on January 3 that the government,s engagement with humanitarian groups and donors on the issue of shelter has always been rocky. She characterized Chombo,s outburst as nothing new and said that despite the criticism of the shelter at Hopely Farm, IOM and the GOZ were proceeding with preparations for similar temporary shelters at a site near Mutare. Along the same lines, WFP contacts have told us that despite the signing of an MOU governing food assistance and

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recommencement of large-scale food distribution in the country (refs B, C), their relationship with the GOZ also remains difficult.

Comment

15. (C) There are clearly elements within the GOZ that acknowledge the growing humanitarian crisis and want international assistance, but they are constrained by their political leadership. As with the Ambassador, November speech, the attacks on Egeland highlight the leadership,s knee jerk response to any international criticism, however muted: to lash out against the messenger as an imperialist stooge.8 It is in this context that the UN is attempting, with some limited success, to establish a dialogue with the GOZ and to encourage cooperation on humanitarian issues. The UN is to be commended for its perseverance in this difficult but necessary task) as many as 4 million Zimbabweans are already food insecure and tens of thousands remain without shelter. The next major step in this process, the proposed visit by UN Under Secretary General for Political Affairs Ibrahim Gambari, promises to be equally fraught. Local UN officials tell us the GOZ deeply distrusts Gambari and views him as sympathetic to its Western critics.

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